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ABSTRACT

As part of a series of manuals prepared for reading education workshops for parents and educators, this booklet focuses on reading readiness activities. Divided into three sections, the booklet describes activities for parents to use with their children that develop speaking and listening vocabularies, inquisitiveness for learning, and ability to organize time and effort. The first section defines learning readiness and the importance of language development in learning to read, then describes nine specific activities to use with preschool through second grade children. Ten activities appropriate for parents to use with children in grades three through six are presented in the second section. The last section deals with the development of areas of readiness essential to children in grades seven through twelve: motivation to succeed, background of experience, and ability to study. (AEA)

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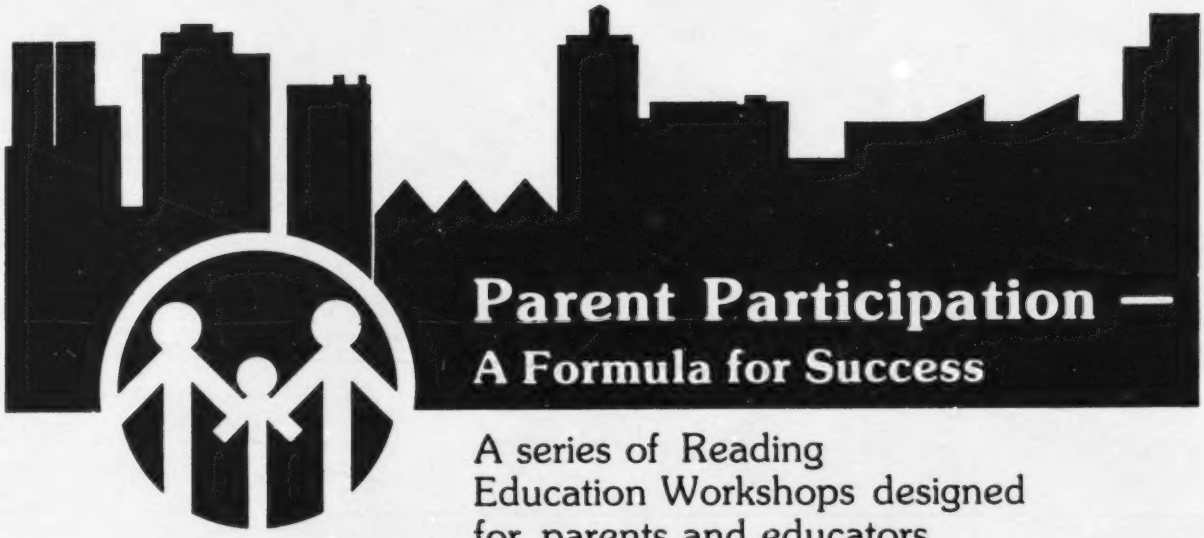

Parent Participation — A Formula for Success

A series of Reading Education Workshops designed for parents and educators

Building Blocks: Reading Readiness Activities

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Parent Participation -

A Formula for Success

Building Blocks:
Reading Readiness Activities

Division of Reading Effectiveness
Indiana Department of Public Instruction
Harold H. Negley, Superintendent
August 1980

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Introduction

Reading readiness is the development of prerequisite language and experiential skills and concepts that enable one to begin reading. Though usually applied to beginning reading, reading expectations and requirements expand as a child progresses through the grades, and there are new readiness requirements at every level.

Parents can contribute to this readiness for reading by developing their child's speaking and listening vocabulary, inquisitiveness for learning and ability to organize time and efforts. This monograph provides activities parents can do with their children at all ages. The three sections cover preschool to Grade 2, Grades 3 to 6, and Grades 7 to 12.

The first section provides suggestions for children in preschool to second grade. For the preschooler, the parent can read books orally, talk with the child and teach rhymes to develop sensitivity to language. In the primary grades, the parent can reinforce the reading activities used by the child's teacher.

Grades 3 to 6 require that a child be able to comprehend stories and short articles in social studies and history. At this level, parents can discuss these subjects with their children, buy them books, and take them to the library and places of interest.

The secondary grades require readiness to study content area textbooks. At this age, the child must be motivated to succeed and to gain functional reading skills. The third section provides suggestions for developing these abilities.

Reading Readiness Activities:

Preschool to Grade 2

What Is Readiness for Learning?

Parents want their children to learn to walk, dress themselves, handle money wisely, read and do many things that are important to human development. For every skill learned throughout life, a person must reach a point of readiness to learn that skill.

In helping a child get ready for school, whether it be preschool, elementary school or secondary school, parents can promote situations that will enable their child to develop a readiness for learning. For instance, a child needs experience away from parents before enrollment in school. Some of the other skills which need to be developed in a child are an ability to share and get along with other children, to listen and follow directions, and to learn how to work independently. These are all important readiness skills, and for all of these a child has to be physically, emotionally and mentally ready.

Readiness for learning is essential from infancy to later life. When it is time to learn to drive a car, there are certain readinesses that are part of that learning. When learning to sew on a machine, readiness experiences such as threading a needle and understanding various stitches are prerequisite.

Readiness for reading involves certain preparations and abilities for the child. Parents can do a great deal for their child if they know what these needs are and work with their child toward his or her development. Listed below is a compilation of readiness suggestions for parents to use to promote their child's development.

Readiness is:	What you, the parent, can do:
Talking	Talk to your child in real words.
Listening	Get your child to talk about the things that he or she sees and does.
Reading experience	Read to your child.
Recognizing reading as important	Read yourself. Let your child see you enjoy the pleasures that reading brings.
Learning from TV	Watch TV with your child. Draw learning from what you watch.
Vocabulary growth	Play word games.
Appreciation of books	Buy books for your child. Teach book care. Introduce your child to the library.
Self-confidence	Praise and encourage your child.

Listening Leads to Reading

Children are capable of communicating their thoughts and feelings very quickly after birth. They will tell their parents in no uncertain terms that they are hungry, have a stomach ache or want a diaper changed. A parent's immediate response to these early communications will help to develop a child's sense of security. When a baby coos and gurgles satisfaction, the parent is rewarded and encourages the infant to use his or her voice.

Several experiences may be used to develop language: Cuddle, smile at or tickle the infant, jiggle him or her up and down in your arms as you hum or play some music, clap your hands or snap your fingers, jingle some rattles, clink a spoon against a glass or place a ticking clock or music box near the child. These will develop the child's listening ability, which is essential to all learning, especially reading.

Talking Leads to Reading

Talking to children can develop their comprehension of language. Though unable to understand all the words, an infant will get the message from a parent's encouraging tones and will try to duplicate sounds with coos and gurgles. As the vocal cords are exercised, the words "ma" and "da" will be heard. Before long, the child will be talking. Nursery rhymes, picture books, lullabies and jingles are all important at this stage. Children love "clippity-clap" and "ting-a-ling" because of the sounds.

As the child becomes a toddler and a talker, the parent can be a storyteller. Below is an example of a favorite bedtime story.

> A frog--a very lonely frog--was all alone in the woods. He hippity-hopped, hippity-hopped, hippity-hopped through the woods looking for a friend. Soon he came to the edge of a pond. As he looked down into the water, he saw another frog. He jumped down into the water, but he could not find his friend. The frog swam all around the pond, but his friend was gone. He jumped out onto the bank and looked down into the water. You know what! There he saw his friend down in the water again. So he jumped back into the water. Again, his friend disappeared.

The parent can ask, "What do you suppose happened?" This can go on indefinitely, as the parent and child add endings. Another activity is to compare water reflections to a mirror. Why not let your child look in the mirror? Children enjoy mirrors, and they can be a great means for developing expression and a positive self-image.

Language Development Leads to Reading

The years from two to four are very crucial years in developing a child's language. A child's speaking and listening vocabulary develops rapidly during this time. At this age, the child begins to combine words into sentences and learns how to use descriptive

words such as the blue shirt, the large leaf, the small dog, the sweet orange juice. Through the use of descriptive words, the child is now able to describe objects or reactions to them.

When a parent reads to a child at this age level, the child may pick up words from stories that are repeated. If so, the child may join in the reading. The parent can encourage this by pointing to words and letting the child tell what the words are. The child can repeat sentences or phrases and give an opinion (e.g., "Why do you like this story?" or "What do you think will happen next?"). The more a parent reads to a child and permits him or her to talk and ask questions, the more reading readiness is established. Learning words requires a great deal of repetition, with concrete objects and illustrations to support understanding of the words.

Activities To Encourage Reading Readiness

1. The Five Senses - As children grow they become more aware of the world around them. Encourage your child to learn about the world through his or her senses - feeling, smelling, tasting, seeing and hearing.

   Feeling - Let your child feel objects that have different textures - hard, soft, rough, smooth, etc. Talk about how they feel.

   Smelling - There are many smells around a house. Point these out to your child and identify them. Make your child aware of the different smells that are outside as well.

   Tasting - When eating, talk about the different tastes of food. Let your child taste things that are salty, bitter, sour, sweet, etc. Help your child to use words to describe the tastes.

   Seeing - Encourage your child to look at things in the house, in the store, outside, etc. Talk about these things, always calling them by their correct name.

Hearing - Have your child close his or her eyes and listen to the sounds. Do this inside the house as well as outside. Let your child identify as many sounds as possible. Talk about these sounds together.

2. Piggy Bank - Prepare a Piggy Bank, or a Word Bank, by using a decorated box. Keep it located for frequent, easy accessibility. As you read to your child and talk about words, make word cards and place them in the Piggy Bank. This is an excellent method to give preschool children experience in learning new words. It is surprising how many words can be learned and actually read.

This should be a fun activity. Do not force your child. Let it be a natural process. Make it a family activity, and if you have older children, they will help teach the younger ones.

3. Trips to the Library - Involve your child by taking out a card in his or her name. Check out books on a regular basis. They can be picture boods, easy reading books, little humorous stories, nursery rhymes or books of poems and limericks. The words in these books can be used in the Piggy Bank activity.

4. Trips to Shopping Centers - These are excellent "learning places" for young children, especially if the shopping isn't too intent. The grocery, the drugstore and the department store are excellent places to discuss the concepts of large and small or colors and shapes.

5. Visiting a Bank - Open a savings account for your child. Ask a banker to explain to your child what money is for. What is a savings account? Where does the money go? Will it get lost? How do you get your money back?

6. Trips to the Zoo - Talk to your child about the different animals; the types of housing they each require, and why; the different foods they eat. Encourage your child to role-play a zoo keeper.

Find books at the library and read to your child the information a zoo keeper needs to know to care for various animals. Your child can even draw pictures of tne animals and the habitat required for their survival.

7. Trips to the Farm - This is an excellent place to learn about domestic animals. Discuss with your child: Why do farmers keep animals? How do they feed them? What do farmers grow? Why?
8. Trips to the Museum - Here is an ideal opportunity for children to witness development from yesterday to today, and what to anticipate in tomorrow's world. In some museums children can actually observe blood circulation, manipulate a simple scientific experiment and see skeletons, prehistoric dinosaurs, etc.
9. "Can Do" - A "Can Do" shirt can be to a preschool or kindergarten child what scout badges are to a scout. "Can Do" may cover a wide range of accomplishments. All you need is a white T-shirt and permanent marker. Every time your child accomplishes a feat, acknowledge it by putting a symbol representing that feat on the T-shirt. Examples of "Can Do" activities are: "can" tie shoes, "can" skip, "can" zip, "can" put on shoes, "can" set table, "can" do jigsaw puzzles and "can" ride a bike. Your child will feel that this is something very special.

Reading Readiness Activities:

Grades 3 to 6

Grades 3 to 6

Readiness is often understood in relation to beginning reading, but this is not its only purpose. Readiness can be anything that prepares children for reading and creates an appreciation for learning. In order to enjoy reading, children must develop an understanding of words. Humor, poetry, limericks and interesting short stories can be used to accomplish this feat. Ten activities appropriate for children in Grades 3 to 6 are presented below.

1. Accumulate a list of little fun things that your child likes to do. You know your child, so you will know the types of things he or she would prefer.
2. Compile a list of books your child likes. This will help you see your child's interests. Your child may also develop a list of books that he or she likes to read to you.
3. Describing Words - Encourage your child to use descriptive words when tel ing about an activity or event. Ask the youngster to think of words that could be used to describe a noun that you suggest. This is a good activity for the dinner table or for a long car ride.

   Example: "Story of the Three Bears"

   Porridge - piping hot, creamy, mushy, tasty
   Beds - feather soft, wide, cozy, warm, safe, comfortable
   Bears - grizzly, furry, chubby, fat, hairy, cuddly
   Forest - tall, thick, muggy, cool, big
   Berries - round, juicy, seedy, blue, ripe

4. Word Families - See how many other words your child can think of that belong in the same category as a word you suggest.

Example:

Horse - donkey, pony, zebra
Bear - koala, grizzly, panda, black, polar
Tiger - lion, panther, cat, kitten, leopard, cub
Store - department, grocery, supermarket, hardware, automotive, toy

5. Read poems aloud so your child can hear the rhythm and rhyme. Poems provide an excellent means of exposing children to the excitement of words.

Mud

Mud is so very nice to feel
All squishy-squash between the toes.
I'd rather wade in wiggley mud
Than smell a yellow rose.
Nobody else but the rosebud knows
How nice mud feels
Between the toes.

-Author Unknown

Way down South where bananas grow
A grasshopper stepped on an elephant's toe.
The elephant said, with tears in his eyes,
"Pick on somebody your own size."

-Author Unknown

6. Introduce your child to cartoons and riddles, which children love. Many cartoons and riddles use words that allow children to enjoy the different meanings of words. Children love to fool their parents or friends by asking them riddles. Help provide an enjoyment in words, as this is essential for good reading. Always have available books on riddles, cartoons and poems.

7. Use limericks, five-line nonsense verses. After reading them, let your child pick out favorites and illustrate them.

Example:

There was an old man with a beard,
Who said, "It is just as I feared,
Two owls and a hen,
Four larks and a wren
Have all built their nests in my beard."

There was an old person of Dean,
Who dined on one pea, and one bean;
For he said, "More than that
Would make me too fat."
That cautious old person of Dean!

There once was a mouse with some cheese
Who didn't say thank you or please,
He climbed on a shelf
And just helped himself;
He found his way there without keys!

Older children might want to try to write some of their own limericks. They can be funny or not.

8. Use words that express action, describing words and words that define.

Example:
1. The caterpillar curleycues up a tree.
2. Earthworms are stranded in the rain.
3. My cat looks like a marigold cluster.
4. The wind crumbled the barn to dust.
5. My garden is a jungle of weeds.
6. My babysitter patters up the steps.
7. Robins twitter for rain.

9. Teach your child nursery rhymes. They should be familiar to all children and are remembered because of their rhyme.

Example:
"Humpty Dumpty"
"Little Miss Muffett"
"Old Mother Hubbard"
"Little Jack Horner"
"Hey Diddle Diddle"

Jack and Jill
Went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water.
Jack fell down
And broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after.

Then up Jack got
And off did trot
As fast as he could caper.
He went to bed
And patched his head
With vinegar and brown paper.

After your child has fun learning and saying a rhyme, go a little farther with it:

Example:

1. Does this nursery rhyme make sense?
3. Why did he fall?
4. What do you think happened when they didn't have the water?
5. What does caper mean?
6. Have you ever tried vinegar and brown paper for a hurt?
7. Do you think it would work?

If you have intermediate children, try having them write nursery rhymes in prose. This is fun and provides a new way to use words.

10. Among activities with your child include outer space, which is always appealing to children. Pretend a "Man From Mars" (MFM) is coming for a visit. Ask your child how he or she would explain some situations and words to the MFM.

Example:

1. The MFM says his people do not live in families. How might they live?

2. The MFM says there are no schools on Mars. How do children learn?

3. Talk about the different ways to give when people are together and don't have presents.

4. The MFM says he does not understand "pretty." What is "pretty"?

5. The MFM says he does not understand "hate." What is "hate"?

6. The MFM says he does not understand "good." What is "good"?

In all such exercises the parents should not be directive but guiding, asking more and more questions. They should, after the child is comfortable with the activity, bring the examples closer and closer to home and to the individual.

Reading Readiness Activities:

Grades 7 to 12

Grades 7 to 12

At the secondary level, readiness concerns preparation for a more difficult and diversified curriculum. There are three main areas of readiness: development of motivation to succeed, a background of experience and the ability to study.

Development of Motivation to Succeed

As your child enters junior high and high school, help him or her to develop a positive attitude toward using knowledge and skills to succeed.

1. Discuss the importance of secondary school years in preparation for adult life. Stress that one's attitude toward school and learning will influence success.
2. Discuss the subjects your child is taking and show a genuine interest in what is being learned. Help your child understand how various courses can help an individual prepare to be a mature, educated adult. Children often cannot see the reasons for studying a given subject and therefore are "turned off" to its content. Parents can increase interest by showing that the course content is of interest to them also.
3. Ask your child to tell you about the classes. When he or she succeeds - does well on a test, participates in a special class activity, receives praise for a project - be generous with your praise of the demonstrated abilities.

4. Be interested in helping your child improve. Give assistance or find someone else who can help, if necessary. Stress that no one is perfect in all areas of study and provide a challenge in a positive manner. Show that you have faith in your child's ability to improve. If the youngster is having difficulty with a class, do not add another burden with your criticism.

5. Help your child see the application of the content being studied. When your child is studying a special unit - such as the election process in social studies; pollution in science; diet in health; or banking services in business - discuss current events from the news which deal with the subject. Related activities, such as planning the week's menus for the family or opening a bank account, will reinforce the content.

Demonstrate that you place a value on education. Your positive attitude will have a definite influence on your child's attitude toward school.

1. Attend parent conferences and open house and discuss these with your child.

2. If you cannot attend conferences, make an appointment with the school guidance counselor to discuss your child's program and meet some of the teachers. This can help you gain more insight into how your child is performing and anticipate areas in which your encouragement may be needed.

3. Share knowledge of your teenager's interests, most effective ways of learning (by reading, working with his

or her hands, listening), attitude toward school, involvement in outside activities and general health with the child's teachers. This will help them understand how to reach and motivate your child to learn.

4. Become involved if your child participates in extracurricular school activities. By attending events in which your child is involved, you will demonstrate that you appreciate total school involvement as well as scholastic performance.

5. Demonstrate your interest and concern for education by letting your child hear you discuss educational issues which influence the schools in your community. Become informed through attention to the school news in the media and through attending school board meetings.

Find opportunities to discuss the future with your child. Children are not ready to make definite decisions during their early secondary years; however, encouraging them to look ahead to their aspirations in adult life will help them realize the relevance of their educational experiences.

1. Encourage discussions of the occupations of family members or other adults your child knows. If an interest in any of these is expressed, the child can be encouraged to talk to the person to learn more about the job.

2. Look for opportunities to explore job possibilities in areas of study that are of interest. For example, if a child is interested in calculators and computers, arrange to join a tour of an IBM Corporation office to see what the future would be in that area. If the interest is in

medicine, truck driving, independent business or a service job, go with your child to talk to someone for more information about the job opportunities in that area.

3. Visit schools, nearby universities or institutions where you vacation. Take time to visit (even before the senior year) and obtain catalogs to stimulate interest in fields of study beyond high school. Even if your child seems disinterested in college, still encourage becoming informed of the opportunities colleges offer.
4. Help your child investigate other alternatives - technical schools, training programs or evening classes in a community college - if a four-year college is not the answer.

Development of a Background of Experience

A significant contribution which parents can make toward preparing for the academic success of their child in secondary school involves assisting in broadening the child's background of experiences. A student who brings experience and an awareness of the environment to both the academic setting and the reading process will be more likely to succeed. Most secondary age children are active. Parents can capitalize on this by channeling that energy toward new opportunities and activities which will broaden the child's knowledge.

Many of the activities which contribute to academic growth are part of a child's typical environment. As opportunities arise, parents may need to direct their child's attention to them. Below are examples of activities which can be promoted and arranged. Whenever possible, parents should participate with the child.

A. Work:

1. If feasible, encourage the child to look for a job. In addition to requiring responsibility and punctuality, a job provides exposure to people who may have different backgrounds and lifestyles.
2. Allow your child to change jobs as often as desired, thus increasing the situations and people to which he or she will be exposed.
3. Suggest that a portion of the money earned be used for an activity, vacation or purchase that the child has never experienced.

B. Travel:

1. Arrange short trips which the child can plan or take alone.
2. Take advantage of summer camp opportunities or school trips.

C. Media and Cultural Events:

1. Encourage your child to watch, listen and read. Television, radio, movies and newspapers provide much information about the world in which the child lives.
2. Take your child to area events, such as ballets, theaters, festivals or concerts.

D. Hobbies and Projects:

1. Participate with your child in any hobbies. Encourage and assist the child who is beginning a new project for school or enjoyment.
2. Assist your child in selecting a hobby if he or she has none.

3. Permit your child to enroll in music, athletic or craft lessons at local schools or civic organizations.

E. Social Development:

Self-confidence and acceptable social skills are developed through observing and modeling the behaviors of others. Adults and peers usually serve as the models. Social development can be fostered by these suggestions:

1. Allow your child to participate in school or civic social functions.
2. Provide opportunities for your child to plan social events for peers.
3. Take your child to adult social gatherings or functions, when possible. Treat him or her as an adult while there.

F. Reading Material:

1. Make available a home library. Include books, newspapers, magazines and brochures of varying interests.
2. Select materials which are related to the hobbies, jobs, interests or experiences your child would like to develop or will encounter. This will help expand the child's knowledge and interests.

Development of the Ability to Study

While enrolled in the secondary grades, your child will take courses in social studies, science, English, mathematics, vocational education and many other areas. In these courses, students are expected to read textbooks, learn facts and ideas, demonstrate these understandings, state facts in their own words and appreciate the subject. The following activities can be done by parents to prepare their child for study:

1. Help your child use reference sources, such as dictionaries, encyclopedias and atlases, which are available at home or in the public library. These sources will be needed for school, and familiarity with their use and purpose will be very beneficial.

    a. Prepare for a trip to another town or state or to a place of interest closer to home. Encourage your child to help you locate background information from reference sources. A trip to the library can provide travel pamphlets and encyclopedias with information about the place you will visit. It is important for a parent to search for information with the child to demonstrate the importance of using reference sources.

    b. Obtain more information about an interest aroused by a trip, television show, etc. With your child, use reference sources such as encyclopedias, maps, globes or magazines with relevant articles, any of which may be in the home or public library.

    c. Let your child see you using the dictionary to locate the spelling, use, pronunciation or meaning of a word when reading or writing. Children will imitate this behavior. Invest in a personal dictionary for the child's study area.

2. Help your child set up a quiet plact for studying or reading for pleasure.

a. Establish an appropriate place for study in your home. The place can be a desk in the child's room, the living room or kitchen table. It should be free from distraction. Discourage TV and phone calls during studying and permit music only if it does not distract the child. A comfortable chair, writing surface and proper lighting are necessary.

b. Develop a supply of materials for the study area, including paper, pens and pencils. A clock can be useful for learning to schedule time. Reference books and such equipment as a calculator can also be helpful.

c. Encourage recreational reading. Establish comfortable areas where there is a reading light and where magazines and other reading materials are kept.

3. Help your child develop interests and hobbies. These can aid in studying for school in several ways. Interests may be related to a topic covered in class, and developing these interests can add to your child's appreciation of the class and supply the extra background needed to succeed with the topic.

Hobbies also often lead to reading and researching a topic, which is exactly the same process needed for content area study.

a. Talk to your child about interests and hobbies, suggesting ways to develop them through relevant trips or clubs. Praise your child's enthusiasm, skill and interest. Demonstrate your sincere interest by trying to provide an acceptable space

in the house for the hobby or by making provision for scheduling related activities.

b. Encourage your child to develop further, related interests. Expanding activities and knowledge may lead to newly discovered areas.

4. Help your child organize his or her time and stick to an organizational plan. Budgeting time so everything can be accomplished is an important study skill.

   a. Assign your child chores to do at home on a daily and weekly basis. If possible, allow flexibility to decide when each chore will be done, but hold the child accountable for completing all of them. This system will force your child to plan ahead and will carry over to planning study time.

   b. Help your child work within other timelines. An example might be to allow only a certain amount of time for television so your child will plan around favorite shows.

   c. Provide time limits for activities, such as a time your child has to be home, the length of time he or she can have the car, etc. Let the child work out scheduling within a given time framework.

   d. Encourage your child to make out a study schedule.

5. Encourage your child to take an active role in school activities. Developing leadership roles and interpersonal relationships and participating in the school's organization will help the child interact with peers and teachers.

Summary

Motivation to succeed, a wide background of experiences and good study habits are all important factors in determining a child's success in school. Through maturation and experience, a child grows and increases in skills and knowledge. Parents can contribute to this growth by providing concern and guidance.